

Parenting Patterns - Polarities

Dear Parent

Welcome to the module on Parenting Patterns, where we discuss the Principles of Polarity in our relationships.

This module, like the Module on the Principle of Correspondence, is challenging. It is not for everyone. If at any point you feel like this Module is too overwhelming, I invite you to come back to the Whatsapp group and share any trouble you're having. You are not alone. The group is here to serve you, as you serve others in turn.

What I can promise is you that for the parents I have worked with, these 2 principles are life changing. I am grateful to share them with you in this Challenge.

If you are a member of the Calm Parent Challenge Group 4 I have sent you Chapter 2 from my Book "When At the Zoo Watch the Humans" on Whatsapp. That Chapter is a great companion piece to this module.

Patrick

Have you ever found yourself resenting someone in your life?

He doesn't love me?

Mum or Dad hurt me when I was a child

They should have done better. I won't make the same mistakes.

If you find yourself stiffening in the presence of this person (if they are still alive) or feeling intense feelings of anger when you think of them, you are not alone. Our mind is constantly playing a track of heroes and villains, victims and victimisers. Unprompted, we can list all the faults of the person concerned. We relish the opportunity to do so, although we might also feel guilt that we "shouldn't think this way."

Harbouring intense feelings of rage or anger to someone isn't unusual, it's the norm. Almost every parent I have worked with in the past six years has carried a "villain" with them from their past. I have too. For many years my villains were my mother ("didn't pay

me enough attention”) and my brother (“doesn’t love me”). Whenever we would have family visits, I would bristle at every new example of their bad behaviour, adding it to the great ledger of insults and harms. At home, I would rage at my wife Maja about them, heaping resentment on to resentment.

All my examples were factually correct. Those situations HAD happened.

And yet they weren’t real.

Neuroscience of the Mind

To discover why, it’s wise to take a moment to understand how our mind works. Reality is not real. It is an image created in our minds. We see, we hear, we touch and taste. Our sensory systems transmit the things people say and do to us which are then relayed via our nervous system into the miracle of our mind. There an image is created of reality.

But reality isn’t reality, it’s an interpretation.

Consider that there is a mass of data which our sensory systems are unable to pick up which is also out there. We miss radio waves, microwaves, infrared and a host of other electromagnetic spectrum. Whilst we talk to each other on a day out in the countryside, we fail to hear bats and insects talk to each other as they speak outside the human sound frequency. On a walk our dog is busy sniffing at smells which exist, but are outside of our experience. For our practical purposes, they don’t exist.

They are not real.

As Deepak Chopra says, “Reality itself, outside of how we subjectively experience it or conceive it to be, has no meaning. There is no absolute ‘objective’ reality, there is only our experience...”

What Does This Mean For Me And You?

In short, it means we can examine our experience using the wisdom of the ages to come to a new understanding of the heroes and villains in our lives.

Put shorter, we can love them again, wholly.

The Principle of Polarity

The Kybalion a Hermetic book purporting to be based on ancient Egyptian and Greek philosophy, written at the start of the 20th Century. I have found it a most useful guide to the human experience.

In *The Kybalion*, one of the seven Hermetic principles is the Principle of Polarity. It states: *“Everything is dual; everything has poles; everything has its pair of opposites.”* Heat and cold, love and hate, joy and grief - each is the same thing at different degrees. There is no “absolute” quality in human experience, only relative positions on a continuum.

We call something “good” or “bad” depending on where we stand. Yet every virtue carries its vice, every pleasure its pain. Polarity is not about moral judgement, but about understanding reality. It says that to understand anything fully, we must see its opposite embedded within it.

Most of us are conditioned to think in moral binaries: good parent/bad parent, success/failure, love/hurt and hero/villain. But nature does not operate in such simplistic categories. A tree needs sunlight and shadow; too much of either kills it.

Polarity invites us to see the unity behind opposites, the hidden symmetry of life. Once you understand this, you stop chasing one-sided emotions (praise, gratitude, peace) and start integrating the full range of human experience.

Every Relationship Contains Both Sides

Every relationship in your life is a field of polarities. You will experience both admiration and resentment, attraction and aversion, support and challenge. The stronger the emotion on one side, the stronger the potential for its opposite.

If you idealise someone, you unconsciously exaggerate your own smallness. If you despise someone, you blind yourself to their contribution to your growth. Both distort perception.

In parenting, this polarity is constant. One moment your child melts your heart; the next, they infuriate you. You can oscillate between tenderness and fury within seconds. This does not mean you are inconsistent; it means you are human.

The goal is not to eliminate the negative but to integrate it - to see how every irritation conceals a hidden service, and every sweetness conceals a hidden cost. Once you do, emotional reactivity decreases and responsibility increases. You begin to love more wholly.

How Parenting Patterns Emerge

Our parenting does not emerge in a vacuum. It is the replay of a story written long before we became parents. We either copy what was done to us or build our identity in defiance of it. Both are reactions, not choices.

What remains unhealed in us demands expression. It searches for release, and the stage it finds is our own family. The anger, neglect or control that shaped our childhood seeks balance, and so we repeat it, invert it, or overcorrect it. A father who grew up smothered by control often raises his children in chaos, believing freedom will heal what order once wounded. A mother starved of affection may flood her children with it until they choke on her love.

Different actions, same origin. Both are still bound to the past.

These repetitions are not random. They are the nervous system's way of seeking completion. Each generation passes on the emotions it couldn't face. What isn't resolved becomes inherited. The child grows up carrying the parent's unfinished feelings - anger, guilt, fear - and spends adulthood trying to make sense of them.

The pattern breaks only when we dissolve the emotional charge that binds us to our parents. Not by forgiving them sentimentally through "letters of forgiveness", not by blaming them endlessly, but by seeing the balance - how what seemed harmful also contained its hidden service. This work is the beginning of that seeing.

"When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in seven years."

Mark Twain

Homework

Step 1. Choose One Parent and One Behaviour

Begin by identifying the parent or person who triggers you most strongly. Bring their image to mind and notice which behaviour still provokes irritation, hurt or anger. Be precise. Avoid vague language such as "they were toxic" or "they never understood me." Instead, describe exactly what they did. For example: "My mother corrected my tone of voice in public," or "My father dismissed my ideas." Then write one clear sentence that captures the charge: "I resent X for Y behaviour." This simple act of

naming begins to separate memory from myth. It brings the emotion into focus and sets the stage for balance.

Step 2. List 20 Benefits

Now ask yourself: How did this behaviour serve me? What strengths, skills, insights, or sensitivities did it force me to develop? The mind will initially resist. It will insist there were no benefits, only pain. Push through that resistance. Write down every possible gain, however small or indirect. Perhaps their criticism made you independent. Perhaps their coldness taught you emotional awareness. Perhaps their control pushed you to assert yourself. The key is quantity; list at least twenty. This forces the brain out of emotional bias and into balance. You will notice, as you write, that the resentment starts to soften. The mind cannot hold gratitude and blame simultaneously.

Step 3. Find the Same Trait in You (The Principle of Correspondence)

Next, look for the same behaviour within yourself. Ask: Where and when have I done the same thing? This is not self-blame; it is recognition of shared humanity. If you despised your parent's control, identify moments when you controlled your child, your partner, or even yourself. If you hated their judgment, recall when you judged others, even silently.

Seeing this symmetry collapses the illusion of moral hierarchy. You are no longer the righteous victim and they the flawed aggressor. You are both expressions of the same human continuum. This realisation releases the charge faster than any act of will.

Step 4. Re-rate Your Emotion

Return to the initial sentence you wrote in Step 1. Read it aloud. On a scale from 1 to 10, note how strong the emotional charge feels now. If it still feels high, repeat Steps 2 to 4 until it drops to two or below. Each new benefit or symmetry you identify neutralises a bit more energy. You are not trying to force forgiveness; you are allowing perception to equilibrate.

Step 5. Journal the Integration

Finally, write a short paragraph to consolidate the new perception. You can use the following statement as an example

"I now see both sides of my parent's behaviour. What I resented has revealed its opposite. What I blamed has become balanced. I thank life for the symmetry."

Expand on it in your own words if you wish. Describe how the perception has shifted, what you learned about yourself, and how you now view your parent differently. This written integration is crucial; it anchors the new neural pattern in explicit language.

Once you have completed the exercise, take a moment to notice the change in your body. Breathing deepens, muscles release, the sense of injustice begins to dissolve. You have not excused or denied the past; you have truly understood it. That difference is what ends repetition across generations.

“The difference between things apparently opposed is merely a matter of degree. Heat and cold, though opposites, are really the same thing, the differences consisting merely of degrees of the same thing. Look at your thermometer and see if you can discover where heat terminates and cold begins.”

The Kybalion

My Example

I mentioned my perception that “my Mother hadn’t paid me enough attention as a child.” (I am the middle child of 3 boys, so you can guess the story). I stacked up the benefits, such as..

- 1. I started reading a lot to gain her attention and became the fastest, most widely read child in my school, reading the Bible twice before 12 and Lord of the Rings in 23 hours.*
- 2. I started public speaking (to gain attention) and joined the Debate club at 16*
- 3. I became extremely sensitive to other people’s emotions to try to understand them (and her)*
- 4. I’d become a musician and toured Europe and the world at 21*
- 5. I developed a love for appearing in front of the camera, I was good at it, I enjoyed the attention*
- 6. By being fiercely competitive for her love I continued to push myself every day for example working 12 hour days during the financial crisis when I worked in the Cabinet Office*

As I started to stack up the benefits, I could see that my mother’s indifference (which was only a perception) had been a huge help to me. You may read these and think “well this would have happened anyway” and you may be right. But it *feels* right to me. I can see reality in a different way. And now, I wouldn’t change a thing.

Furthermore it wasn’t hard for me to stack up multiple examples of where I had withheld my love from other people. I was doing it to my wife, Maja, all the time. That bitter truth (The Principle of Correspondence) hurt, but also made sense.

As I wrote down the examples, my irritation towards my mother and my sense of victimhood died down. I started to see that the negative experience had just as many positives and I was grateful for it. I started being more loving towards Maja, my wife, and my daughters too, more forgiving and open.

“Love and hate are simply the same thing, each varying only in degree. You can change hate to love by reversing the poles.”

The Kybalion

I can't wait to hear from you as you go through this Module. It's one of the most life changing exercises you can do!

With love,
Patrick